

ACTION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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A 421
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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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BUREAU of INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

MAR 22 1966

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SAN SALVADOR; MANAGUA; CINCSO FOR
POLAD - PANAMA for - 1

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: March 18, 1966

SUBJECT: Monthly Guerrilla Report -- February

REF :

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDS:MR
REVIEWED BY *Carj* DATE: OCT 1967
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

SUMMARY:

1. Terrorist activity in Guatemala City was almost non-existent during the month of February, as the extremist leaders held back their forces to avoid disrupting the March 6 elections. Such events as did occur, were either chance encounters or anti-terrorist strikes carried out by the GOG. However, the quiet in the capital was not emulated in the rural Departments of Guatemala; in fact evidence began to mount during the month that the guerrillas perhaps intended to carry out their threat of opening another "front" on the Pacific littoral. Also, and of greater significance, was the Communist party conference which occurred during February.

2. A Second Front?: Significantly, Communist propaganda, particularly that published by the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR), was distributed in increasing quantity on the southern coast, and a publication which had not appeared for over a year ("El Grito Popular, Voz de la Revolución, Region del Sur"; see Embassy's A-387) suddenly was circulated again. The object of Communist attack seemed to be the large farms which exist on the coast, where labor problems and landless peasants combine to create a frequently unpleasant atmosphere, and where most of the propaganda was found. In several instances, crops were burned or damaged (the cotton harvest is about due), and in at least one instance, according to fairly reliable sources, the attack on a fincas was carried out by several armed

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Clearances:

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Page 2 of 4
Airgram No. A 421
From GUATEMALA

men dressed in olive drab uniforms. Allegedly, these prefaced their assault by capturing the local finca administrator. They then queried how much he paid his laborers, and when he told them, they ordered him to double the wages or suffer the consequences. When he refused, they forced him, on threat of death, to light the fire which burned some 1500 quintales of cotton.

3. However, the most dramatic incident was the burning of nine aircraft on a finca near Escuintla. These had been used mostly for crop dusting. The FAR subsequently claimed it was the author of the attack, and that its objective was to sabotage the cotton crop of the wealthy finqueros. Despite this claim, there were also indications that others may be to blame, and indeed the owner of the aircraft accused PID (the "official" party) sympathizers of perpetrating the attack. It was well-known that the aircraft had also been used to scatter political propaganda in favor of the Partido Revolucionario (PR), which represented the principal opposition to the GOG in the presidential election campaign. Naturally, the PID denied the accusation, and it was never definitively determined exactly who committed the crime. B41 EC

4. As a result, "terrorism" on the southern coast can be attributed to varying sources, and not only to Communist guerrillas. Some of the incidents may well have been brought about by political rivalries, some by vandalism, and some by guerrillas. At this point, it is too early to tell how serious the Communist party is about its vaunted "second front" in the south, and it will take continuous observation over a period of time to determine whether in fact there is a new Communist emphasis on the area, or whether the events of February are merely chance occurrences with no specific pattern.

5. The Communist Party Conference: Probably the single most important event of the month was the national conference of the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (PGT - the Guatemalan Communist Party) held from February 24-27. Planned well in advance, the conference was attended by a total of about 60 top Guatemalan Communists (including several exiles, such as Victor GUTIERREZ, who secretly re-entered the country), members of the Juventud Patriótica del Trabajo (JPT - the Communist youth wing) and members of the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR - the guerrilla arm of the PGT). 21 EC

6. Apparently [redacted] there were strong differences of opinion expressed between the PGT and the FAR and JPT, but these appeared to be resolved by a PGT explanation of its activities and by changes in the personnel of the Party's Central Committee. Bernardo ALVARADO Monzon was, however, reelected as Secretary General of the PGT. 31 EC

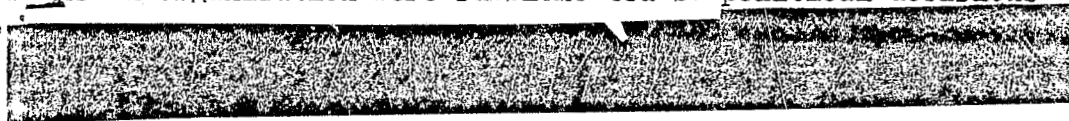
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Page 3 of 4
Airgram No. A 421
From GUATEMALA

7. Decisions on organization were supplemented by political decisions of some note.



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SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

1. The Army's "Operation Tomato" ended with relatively little evidence of success. Five guerrillas were claimed as killed, two wounded, and three abandoned camp-sites were found, along with quantities of Communist propaganda.
2. Army undertakes the misnamed "Operation Amigo", a search and destroy mission which met with no success, and was called off after 10 days as election day drew near.
3. On the night of February 7, nine aircraft in the Escuintla area were destroyed by armed, uniformed men (Embtel 543).
4. Also on February 7, a military commissioner in El Florida was reportedly robbed of Q2,000, two .22 caliber rifles, one .38 revolver, and a shotgun.
5. On February 9, near Zacapa, armed men raided a police building, and telephone lines were cut. No other damage or loss reported.
6. On February 13, unknown assailants (although a number of suspects were captured later) killed two National Policemen who were on duty in their radio patrol car. However, it appears as if this was a chance encounter and not premeditated (Embtels 562 and 558).
7. On February 20, an employee of the Bank of London and Montreal was shot to death in Escuintla. At about the same time, a comisionado militar in San Marcos was found murdered, and again in Escuintla, fires destroyed some experimental agricultural fields. There were also confirmed reports of the destruction of considerable privately-owned cotton in the same general area.
8. In early February, a total of about 11 Guatemalan guerrillas were killed or captured inside Honduras.

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SECRET

Page 4 of 4
Airgram No. A 421
From GUATEMALA

9. February 28, near Esquipulas, an army patrol made contact with guerrillas; two soldiers were wounded. Subsequent patrols located three abandoned guerrilla camps.

For the Ambassador:

Edward V. Nef

Edward V. Nef
Second Secretary

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